

SAVING STONY CREEK VALLEY

“Tens of thousands of wilderness acres with an easy day's drive of tens of millions of people is truly remarkable. But that's just what we have along the leading edge of the Appalachian Mountains north of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.”¹

Why does this wilderness area exist?

“Several factors account for this wilderness area, most notable being the fact that after being largely exploited of its marketable resources, nobody wanted it.”¹

“The (Pennsylvania) Game Commission began purchasing much of this land in the 1940s and designated it State Game Land 211.”¹

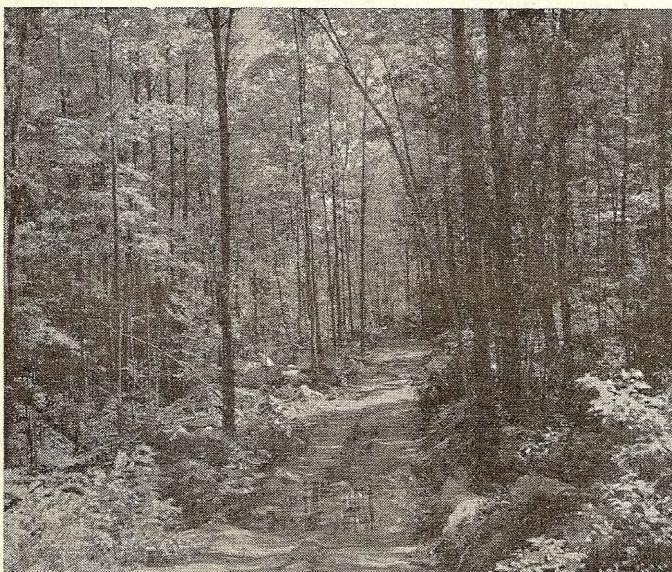
Purchase of this land by the state agency should preclude any development. But this unique wilderness area has been threatened since the 1960s.

Each time grass roots opposition, extreme only in their love for this last unspoiled natural area, have managed to stop its destruction.

Two articles from the 1944 Pennsylvania Game News follow. Each article denotes enthusiasm for the proposed acquisition.

BUT THINGS CHANGE.

¹ Anton's Wilderness, Game News (February 1999)



LUMBER ROAD THROUGH GOOD HARDWOOD TIMBER

Stony Creek Valley, within the former Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company lands, under contract for purchase by the Game Commission.

A LAND purchase project of outstanding interest and importance to the public, especially to the large number of sportsmen and other outdoor enthusiasts in Dauphin, Lebanon, and Schuylkill Counties, was announced by Governor Edward Martin in December 1943, the purchase having been agreed upon by the Game Commission on November 18. This project comprises approximately 37,762 acres of forest covered mountains in northern Dauphin and Lebanon Counties. No farm land is included. The exact acreage will later be determined by survey made by the Commission's engineers.

These lands, which originally totalled more than 40,000 acres, were formerly owned by the Philadelphia & Reading Coal and Iron Company, having been in its possession for more than half a century.

The lands are divided into two main blocks, being separated only by a comparatively narrow strip through Clark Valley, Dauphin County. Most of this strip was acquired by the City of Harrisburg for its water supply. The city within the last few years constructed a dam across Clark Creek, forming a large reservoir which supplies the greater part of its water supply. Part of its watershed is included within the Game Commission's purchase project. Since protection of forests from devastating fires is an important factor in game management practices, and since good forest growth is essential to a watershed, Harrisburg's supply of water will receive no little benefit from the Commission's acquisition of lands adjacent to its reservoir.

The area north of Clark Valley, frequently called either the Lykens or Greenland section, is south of the town of Lykens and contains about 10,749 acres. It is about ten miles long and three miles at its greatest width. Perhaps as much as one-half of it is covered with scrub oak. The remainder of the area contains commercially valuable tree species of various sizes and ages.

The area south of Clark Creek contains approximately 27,013 acres. It is about 24 miles long, extending from a point near Dauphin eastward through Lebanon County to the Schuylkill County line, and is about 3½ miles at its greatest width. It includes about 16 miles of Stony Creek Valley, the north slope of Second Mountain, and most of Third, Stony and Sharp Mountains. It likewise includes the Gold Mine and Rausch Gap areas, approximately 4,000 acres, where a moderate amount of coal is now being removed. Coal rights are excepted and reserved from this area for a period of 25 years. No minerals are reserved on the remaining approximately 33,000 acres. Three oil pipe lines and one telephone line cross this area, and the Schuylkill and Susquehanna Branch of the Philadelphia & Reading Coal and Iron Company railroad extends through it for a distance of about 24 miles.

Forest growth, in spite of many very rocky spots, is of better quality on the Stony Creek block than on the Lykens block. It is the usual mixture of hardwoods, interspersed with pines, and hemlock, customarily found in the central and southern parts of

Large Game

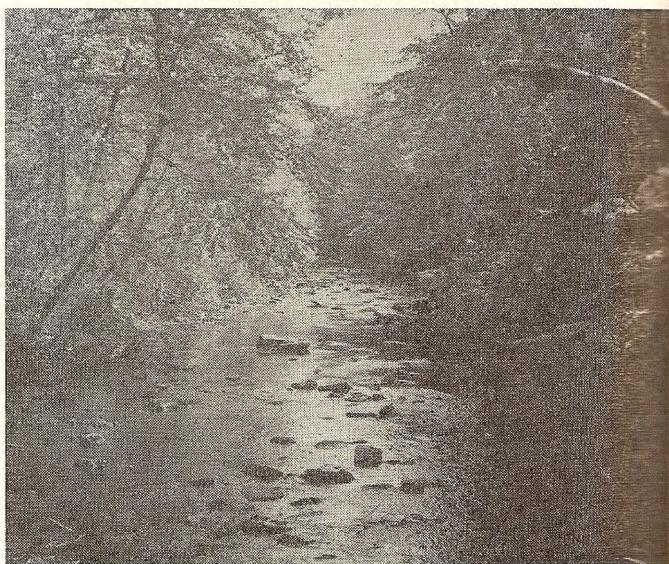
By W. Gard. Conklin

Pennsylvania. White, black, rock and scarlet oaks, yellow poplar, black and yellow birches, hickory and other species range from sapling to saw log size.

Of interest to nature lovers is the fact that American Holly (*Ilex apaca*) is found on a few spots in Stony Creek Valley. This beautiful evergreen shrub, with its red berries, commonly used for Christmas decorations, is not found in any abundance in Pennsylvania, it being a species growing in abundance in Southern States. The comparatively small amount found here will receive added protection through Commonwealth ownership. The penalty for removing it from State Game Lands is \$25 for each plant.

Wildlife is reasonably abundant throughout the area being acquired, which is somewhat surprising considering its close proximity to large centers of population. The number and abundance of the various species present is unusual within an individual land purchase project. Practically all of the forest game species native to southern and central Pennsylvania are to be found here. Deer of good size and condition can be classed as abundant, and an occasional bear is reportedly seen. Wild turkeys, once common in this section, are gradually increasing in numbers. A few beavers are present, as well as foxes and other fur-bearers. Gray squirrels, cottontail rabbits, and raccoons are fairly abundant, and a few ruffed grouse are found. Reasonably good trout fishing is available in Stony Creek.

One privately owned interior holding of about 200 acres exists within the Lykens section. It is thought that this tract will later be secured in one way or another. In the Stony Creek section, there are three such holdings. One tract of about 90 acres at Cold Spring is commonly known as Camp Shand and used during the summer months by boys of the Lancaster Y. M. C. A. This was the site of a hotel and health resort many years ago. The water from Cold Spring is said to have medicinal properties. This tract had once been proposed as the site for a Jesuit Priests Monastery, but the plan was dropped for some unknown reason. Two other tracts, which will be interior holdings in the same general vicinity, had never belonged to the Philadelphia & Reading Coal and Iron Company. These two may possibly likewise be secured in the future in one way or another.



STONY CREEK

Well-known to sportsmen of Dauphin County. Within the former Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company lands under contract for purchase by the Game Commission.

Tract Acquired

Commission Purchases Large Acreage in Dauphin and Lebanon Counties—Former Philadelphia & Reading Coal and Iron Company Lands

The fact that the lands which the Game Commission is acquiring is situate adjacent the Indiantown Gap Military Reservation is pleasing to military authorities. Governor Martin recently made the statement, "The acquisition of this large tract contiguous to the Artillery Range of the famous Indiantown Gap Military Reservation is most timely, as it can be used immediately to aid the war effort if needed."

Whether or not any portion of the land now being acquired by the Game Commission will be used for military maneuvers is, problematical. It stands to reason, however, that if any State Game Lands can be used to advantage in aiding the war effort, sportsmen whose money makes the purchase possible will be happy over such eventuality.

The Grand View Coal Company became the record owner in 1938. It later transferred about 2300 acres to the City of Harrisburg for use in connection with its water system. Early in 1942, 11,113 acres were conveyed by the Grand View Coal Company to H. Albert Smith, and in September 1943 the coal rights for about 4,000 acres of this area were conveyed to Ralph C. Mathewson. In the meantime, the Pennsylvania Department of Military Affairs agreed to purchase in the neighborhood of 1,000 acres of the original tract to be added to the Artillery Range of the well known Indiantown Gap Military Reservation.

The Commission's successful negotiations were conducted with Allen Gray Clark, Esq., President of the Grand View Coal Company and others concerned and include the 11,113 acres previously sold to H. Albert Smith. However, the Commission when it agreed to purchase the lands stipulated that it would accept the Smith acreage only if Mr. Clark could persuade Mr. Mathewson to release his coal rights at the expiration of twenty-five years for the 4,000 acres. He finally succeeded in doing so, and the land purchase contracts were then promptly entered into for the full amount of 37,762 acres, more or less.

Examining the titles and surveying the boundary lines of this large acreage will require many months of exacting work and, unfortunately, more than the ordinary length of time will be required since the staff of the Division of Lands has been reduced as a result of the war. When titles are finally transferred to



VIEW OF THE LYKENS SECTION

At the junction of the Greenland dirt road and the State Highway on Peters Mountain.

Forest growth on the left side of the road is largely scrub oak; commercially valuable trees on the right.

Part of the former Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company lands.

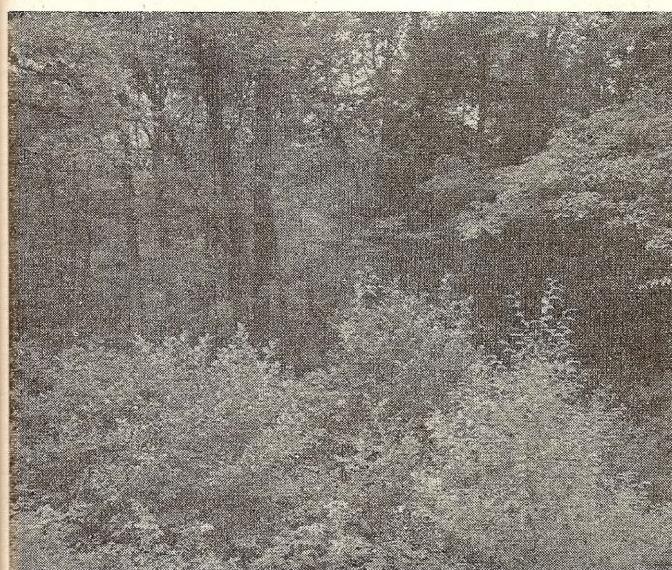
the Commonwealth, for use of the Game Commission, the area will become one of the outstanding and important unit blocks of State Game Lands, and dedicated indefinitely for the use of sportsmen and the general public.

This purchase project comprises the largest, practically contiguous, area of land successfully negotiated by the Game Commission since its land purchase program began in 1920. The only other comparable deal was a transaction concluded about 15 years ago for approximately 65,000 acres owned by the Central Pennsylvania Lumber Company. That deal, however, comprised a number of disconnected tracts distributed through a half dozen counties, and actually represented a number of separate purchase projects.

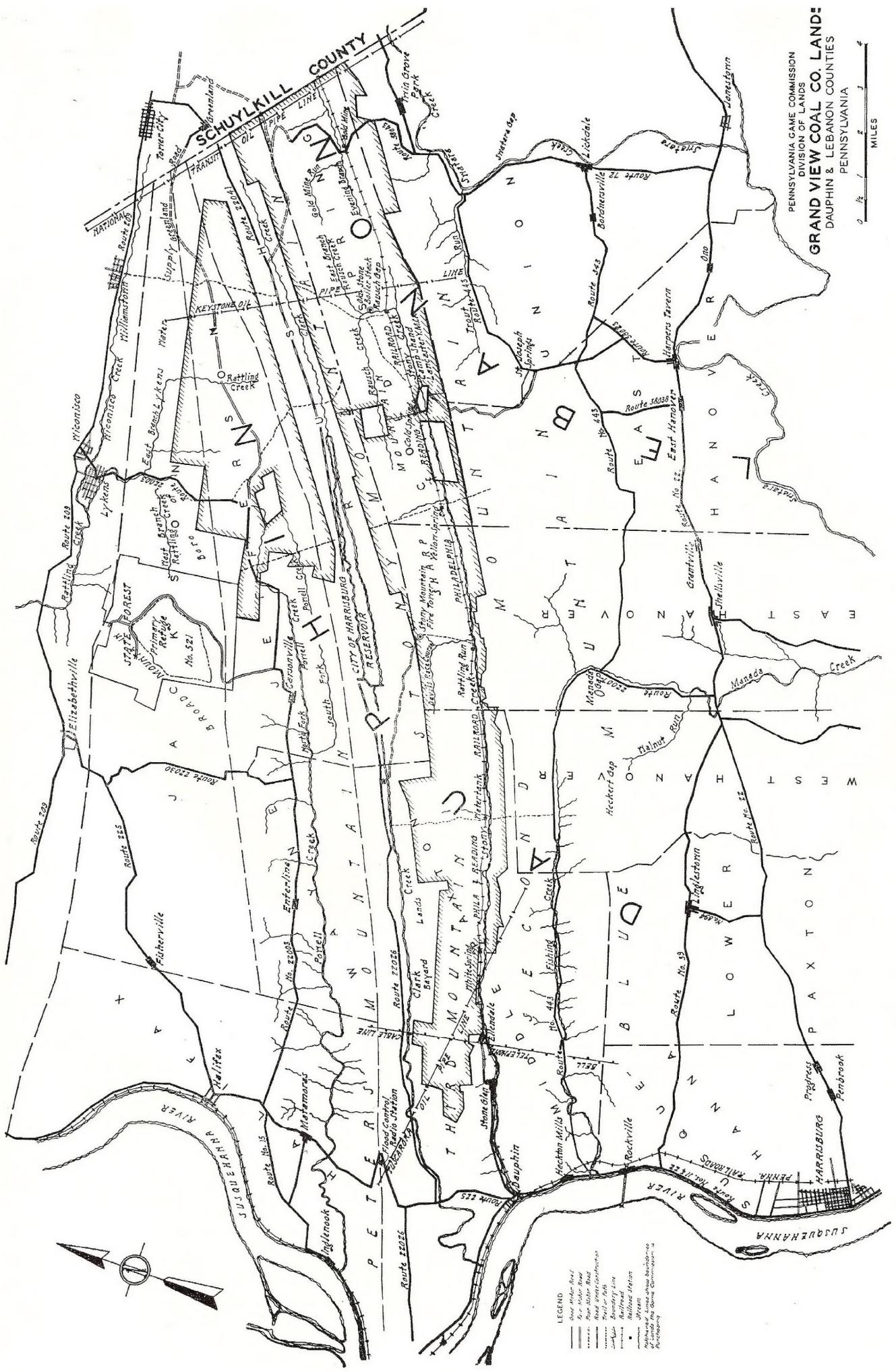
The recent project is of more than customary interest and importance since so large an acreage of good hunting and fishing territory, in an almost contiguous area, and situate so close to a large hunting population, is extremely rare in Pennsylvania. Also, of great importance to sportsmen, who provide the money, is that these lands will cost the Commission an average of a little less than \$2 per acre. This price is lower than that paid for comparable lands in other counties of the State, and considerably below the general average of \$3.86 per acre paid for the 742,362 acres of State Game Lands bought and paid for since 1920.

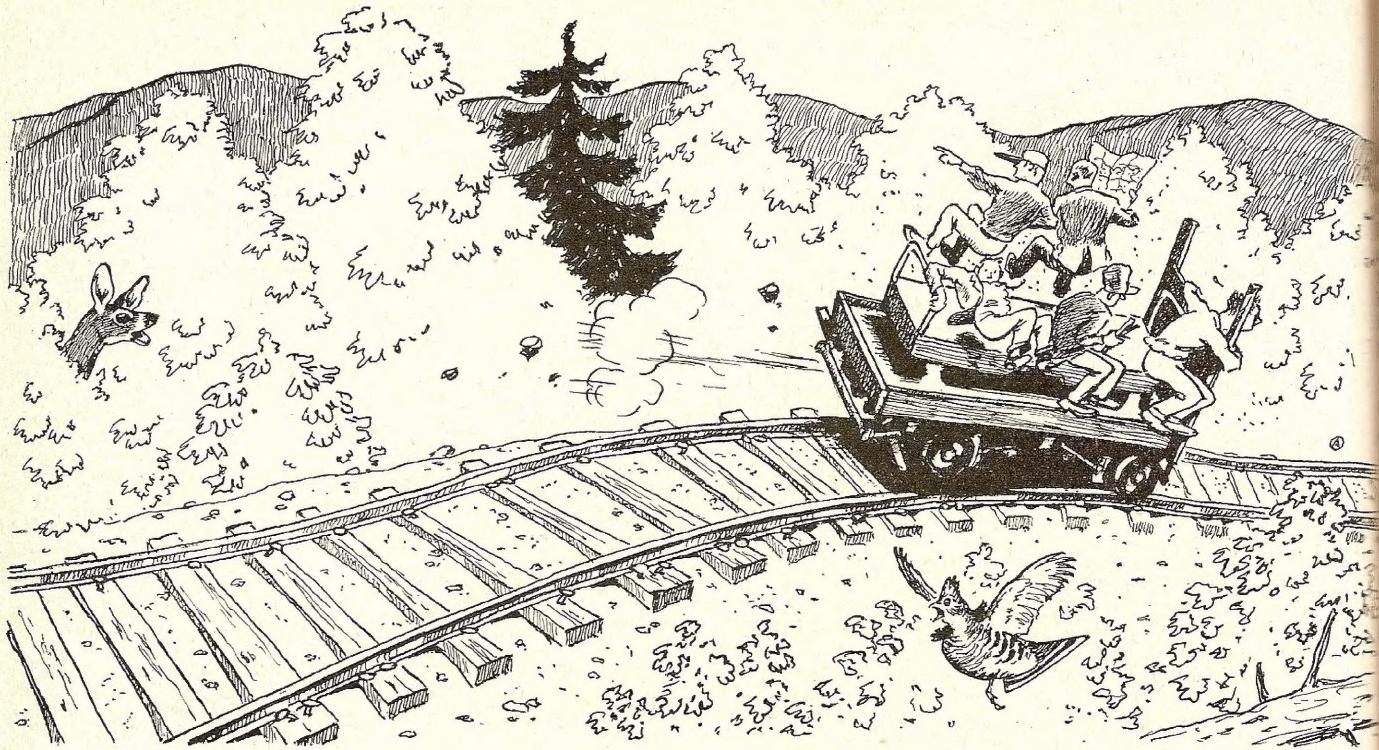
Another point of interest, and of no little importance to sportsmen of Dauphin County, is that Dauphin is one of only five counties in the State in which no State Game Lands had previously been acquired. A total of 5,641 acres were purchased in Lebanon County within the past few years, the former Mt. Gretna Military Reservation. Efforts during the past 23 years to secure one or more contiguous areas of good hunting and fishing territory in Dauphin County, of a size large enough to make worthwhile game management projects, and at prices the Commission is justified in paying for such lands, proved fruitless. For the Commission now to be able to purchase what constitutes a huge acreage in a densely populated section of the State is exceedingly fortunate. Dauphin County sportsmen, naturally, urged the acquisition of these lands, as did also many sportsmen in Schuylkill County. The Southeastern Division of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, comprising the counties east of the Susquehanna River and south of the Blue Mountain range, likewise endorsed the purchase.

Attention is invited to the map of the lands involved in this purchase reproduced on the inside of the back cover of this issue. The boundaries are indicated in heavy lines with hatching. County and township lines are also shown, as well as the more important roads, city, and towns in the vicinity and other important topographic details.



COMMERCIALLY VALUABLE TREES ALONG THE GOLD MINE ROAD
Eastern section of the former Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company property.





A Rocky Ride Up Stony Creek

By Jacob B. Abbott

Illustrations by the Author

YOU HAVE probably read of the Uganda Railway in British East Africa, the building of which was held up for several weeks by man-eating lions; you have no doubt seen some of the late Martin Johnson's unrivaled movies of African wildlife, taken as he jolted over the veldt in an especially-equipped truck. Both of these treks through game-filled wilderness pale before the recent venture undertaken by Commissioner John C. Herman, his son Jim, and the still-shaken writer, under the escort of Gard. Conklin, intrepid Chief of the Division of Lands, Pennsylvania Game Commission.

We embarked at the little Dauphin station of the S. & S. Branch of the Reading Railroad. The vehicle which was to take us, on the rails in front of the station looked harmless enough, yes, even gentle, as it sat there motionless in the sunlight. We were later to discover its capabilities for commando work in action. For descriptive purposes this four-wheeled contraption was a combination jeep and handcar and was manned by a crew of two experts: C. E. Rhoads, "engineer" and R. L. Beaver, "conductor." No tickets were taken but we signed away our lives in releases to the Reading, absolving them from all blame if any of us was brought back in a basket. We climbed aboard the center platform seat, after stowing away lunch, cameras and other paraphernalia underneath and a couple of lusty cranks by the engineer started the

putt-putt-putting of the gas motor. With a lurch we were off up the winding, bouncy track that runs some twenty miles through the valley to Gold Mine Station. To the writer, clutching an iron rail for dear life, the experience was comparable to twenty-five rides on a roller-coaster, but the scenery was considerably more attractive than fleeting views of hot dog stands and other carnival concessions. As our juggernaut hit uneven rails or went over switches we in-

voluntarily left our perches and sailed through the air in seated positions to be met and bounced by this railroad jeep as it rose to contact us at more distant points. Commissioner Herman was perhaps the most nonchalant of all—maybe his trout-fish-decorated ski cap gave him courage—pointing out spots of interest and waving the topographical map in the most care-free manner. As far as I know he wasn't holding on to anything. Major Conklin was a close second in coolness, but he was a "ringer," a veteran; he had made the trip twice before.

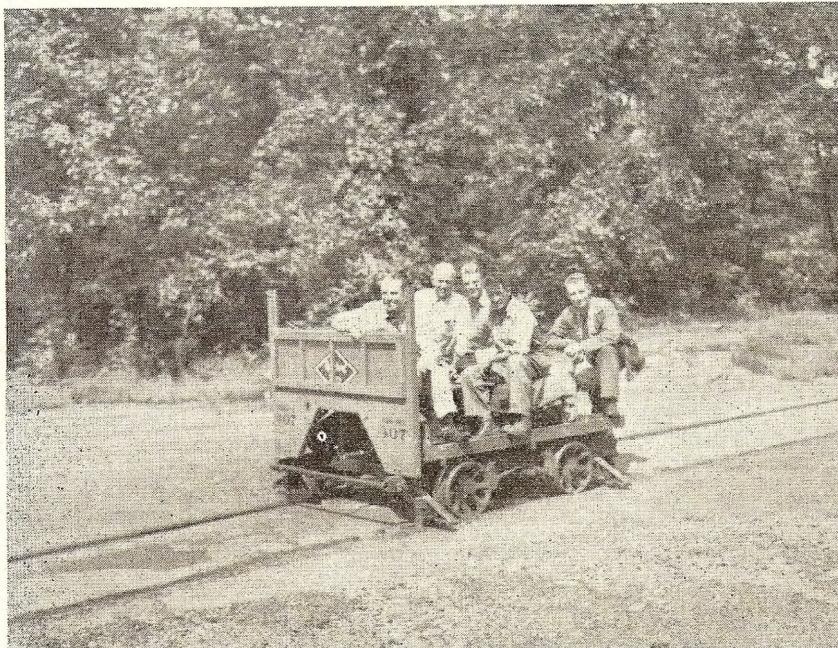
Stony Creek Valley, well-named for the countless boulders strewn through its wooded slopes, lies between Second and Third Mountains of the Blue Ridge. As we hurtled along the waving rails a mixture of hardwoods, interspersed with a few pines and hemlocks, flashed by (at 15 miles per hour) on either side and as we penetrated deeper into the valley the timber grew larger until we were going through tracts of practically virgin forest. Stony Creek runs down the floor of the valley on the south side of the track, but hidden from view by the thick stands of hardwoods. Commissioner Herman, who has fished this creek up and down, speaks well of its trout. The blue rampart of Second Mountain showed on our right just above the tree tops as we chug-chugged along this steel trail through the woods.

(Continued on page 27)



A ROCKY RIDE UP STONY CREEK

(Continued from page 14)



How the party looked when the jeep was not rolling.

The eastern half of the valley is old coal mining country and all along the sides of the roadbed in this section are evidences of mining operations, idle and abandoned these sixty or seventy years. Oaks, hickories and seedling poplars cover the site of a once thriving railroad town of five hundred houses and over a thousand inhabitants; a hidden, overgrown graveyard is the only reminder of former human habitation. This is Rausch's Gap, now marked by a sign over a ramshackled, weather-beaten shed.

We had lunch—I having provided none—was fortunate enough to share in some mighty good sandwiches prepared by Mrs. Conklin, and the Commissioner and Jim had brought along some remarkable fried chicken, the legs of which were all white meat (according to their story)—beside one of the fastest flowing natural springs of ice cold water in Pennsylvania. This was at Cold Spring, a famous summer resort and the site of a big hotel in the '80s. The setting for the luncheon was ideal, the spring welling up within a once-glass-enclosed pergola and rippling down to form a little stream which wound off through the sunny woods. Big hemlocks and pines surrounded the spring and we spread our feast on the sun-splashed grass beneath them. It was country to delight the trout fisherman and grouse hunter.

Now why all this descriptive preamble to a day's outing for four men? Because the Pennsylvania Game Commission is buying for Pennsylvania sportsmen to use over 27,000 acres of land in this wild, remote valley and wild and remote it is, although the ridges guarding it can be seen from the Capitol City. With its trout streams and aisles of oaks, beeches and poplars it is country in which the sportsmen can revel.

Deer are more than plentiful (wherever we got out we saw tracks); foxes and 'coons are there. Much of it looks like good grouse country. Hunters and hikers want to watch their steps, though, as they must in many parts of the Commonwealth's hunting country. The innumerable rocky formations scattered through the woods form attractive lurking places for copperheads and rattlers. Forty-six of the latter were killed in one season recently by trackmen engaged in mowing the 27-mile right-of-way. In most of Pennsylvania's woods similar care must be taken, particularly around rocky ledges. Watch where you put your hands when climbing any wooded cliff and look carefully when you step over logs in country where rattlers are known to be common. Ordinary hunting boots are almost perfect protection, but if you are going to run around bare-legged in sneakers take a look see where you put your feet.

Many sportsmen know this country generally, particularly Dauphin County hunters and fishermen, and an article describing the territory and its proposed acquisition appeared in the February 1944 GAME NEWS. With this purchase effected and under the management of the Game Commission, many conditions will be improved and the beneficiaries will be Pennsylvania's sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts.

An animal locally described as a panther observed by residents near Corry, Pennsylvania, is reputed by local Game Protectors who made a thorough investigation to be either a large police dog or some other mongrel.

A Sportsman's Queries

(Answered by Chas. F. Stambaugh)

Question. Are box traps legal?

Answer. Yes, but they must be tagged and visited the same as is required of steel traps. They must not be equipped with nails or other "teeth" to hold the animals. No game animals except raccoons may be taken in box traps.

Question. Are deadfalls legal?

Answer. Yes. They too must be tagged and visited as required by law.

Question. May a person with a hunting license shoot crows on Sunday?

Answer. Yes, insofar as the Game Law is concerned. Another law makes any Sunday hunting or shooting unlawful, under penalty of \$4.00 for each offense.

Question. Why is it that raccoon hunting season opens before raccoon trapping?

Answer. The principal reason is to give the raccoon hunter and his dog a chance to hunt for a short time (a week in 1944) without the danger of his hound being caught in a trap.

Question. May a person with license carry a rifle on a trap line?

Answer. Yes. But it must not be an automatic.

Question. What can a hunter do if his dog gets caught in a trap legally set?

Answer. About all he can do is release the dog. However, trappers are asked and instructed to set traps in such manner that dogs are not liable to get caught in them. If the traps are set legally, it is doubtful whether the dog owner has any legal redress against the trapper.

Question. Is it legal to set traps in den trees for raccoons?

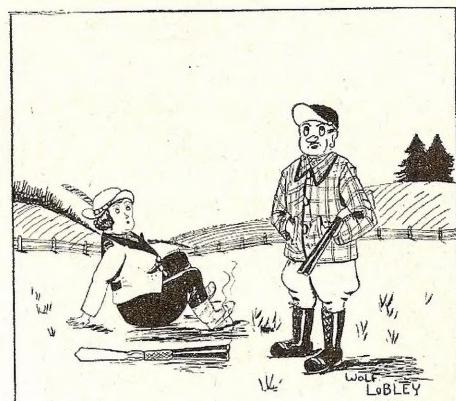
Answer. Definitely not. Traps may not be set within five feet of a den.

Question. Is squirrel shooting allowed on Sunday?

Answer. No. It is unlawful to shoot any game birds or animals on Sunday.

Question. What can we do with a skunk that gets in a fox trap out of season?

Answer. If the skunk is uninjured it should be carefully released at once. Should it be severely injured or killed, it must be reported to the nearest Game Protector immediately, and he will advise disposition. He will NOT allow you to keep it.



"Oh yes, I forgot you only pull one trigger at a time!"